

HEALTHNET NEWS

A newsletter for public librarians and others interested in consumer health information services

Volume XX Number 3

Fall 2005

UPDATE

CHILDREN'S RESOURCE GUIDE NOW ONLINE

Your Child: A Health Resource Guide is a new feature on the Healthnet's website. It is a practical, comprehensive, online resource "to assist parents gathering information about their children's health and development." This new feature located at <http://library.uhc.edu/departm/hnet/child.html> provides a descriptive directory of both print and online sources about children's physical, developmental, mental, and dental health. Connecticut organizations and government agencies are included throughout the Guide.

The resources are categorized by topic, including Your Child's Growth, Selecting (and Communicating With) a Pediatrician, Obtaining Health Insurance, Caring for Your Child's Teeth, Positive Child Rearing, Gathering Health Information, Nutrition, Being Your Child's Health Advocate, Children's Health News, and Financial Planning for Special Needs Children.



Among the resources are publications from the American Medical Association and the Yale Child Study Center, an online pediatrician referral system from the American Academy of Pediatrics, a comprehensive article on communicating with a child's doctor written especially for parents of children with disabilities, a parent's guide to tooth development and a child's first dentist visit, as well as hyperlinks to the Connecticut Husky Plan Insurance Program and to the Connecticut CHILDFIND Program that directs parents of children with special needs to Connecticut agencies.

Equally important is the Guide's recommendation that parents seeking health information "consult the Reference Librarian at.. [their].. public library"!

NETNEWS

SURGICAL PROCEDURE VIDEOS NOW AVAILABLE ON MEDLINEPLUS

Did you know that MedlinePlus – <http://medlineplus.gov/> - now has pre-recorded web casts of surgical procedures that can be viewed online? Look in the lower right hand corner of MedlinePlus's main page for the link to these videos. These are actual operations performed at medical centers in the United States since January 2004. The videos last an hour. You will need RealPlayer to view the programs. If you do not have RealPlayer on your computer, you will be prompted to obtain a free download of the software before you view the presentation.

There are over 100 video presentations on surgical procedures including gastric bypass, living donor kidney transplant, birth by cesarean section, coronary artery bypass surgery, rotaror cuff repair, and herniated disk repair. Transcripts of the broadcasts may also be downloaded and printed. There are several videocasts from Hartford Hospital.

The videocasts tell people to call in with questions, but since these are not live presentations, this option is not available.



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MOST RECENT ADDITION TO MEDLINEPLUS

The National Library of Medicine has released another enhancement to its web-based consumer health resource, MedlinePlus, <http://medlineplus.gov/> . Over 100 herbal and supplement monographs in English and Spanish have been added to complement the information currently available on prescription and over-the-counter medications. The herbal monographs are from the Natural Standard, an evidence-based, peer-reviewed collection of information on alternative treatments.

Each monograph includes information on the herbs uses, dosing, safety, interaction, and selected references. Many of the herbal monographs have a photograph of the herb. The herb or supplements efficacy is presented in a table with each indication given a grade ranging from A (strong scientific evidence for its use) to F (strong scientific evidence against its use)

The Natural Standard monographs can be found by selecting Drugs and Supplements from the MedlinePlus homepage. You can find Natural Standard monographs by choosing Drugs & Supplements from the MedlinePlus home page.

NEW AARP PRESCRIPTION DRUG WEBSITE

Finding information comparing the prices and effectiveness of prescription medications has just become a little bit easier. Reliable websites are available to help health consumers determine if a newer, more costly medication is more effective than an older medication manufactured to treat the same illness.



In addition to the drug comparison information available on the **Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs** website at <http://crbestbuydrugs.org/index.html> (described on page 3 of the Spring 2005 issue of *Healthnet News* - <http://library.uchc.edu/departm/hnet/spring05.pdf>), the **AARP**, a nonprofit advocacy organization for individuals aged 50 and older, has recently launched a new prescription drug area on its website. Both drug information websites, written especially for the health consumer, are available free online.

The AARP site **Effective and Safe Prescription Drugs** (<http://www.aarp.org/health/comparedrugs>), features medication information organized by both drug name and medical condition. The Consumer Reports website discusses medications in ten drug categories such as calcium channel blockers, antihistamines, and antidepressants.

The **AARP** website describes around seventy-five “commonly prescribed” individual medications for nine health conditions in brief, consumer-friendly language. The website plans to expand its drug coverage to twenty-five drug categories. A link to “Safety and Effectiveness” from the individual drug description leads to a comparison of the drug’s class, including research findings on effectiveness and side effects of drugs within the class and availability of less expensive generic drugs. For each type of medication, there is a hyperlink to a cost comparison chart.

Unique to the **Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs** website are Spanish as well as English versions of all of its prescription drug descriptions as well as brief alert messages on recently available generic drugs and newly reported medication side effects. For each drug report, readers have the choice of downloading a two-page summary or a more extensive summary of approximately nine pages, in either English or Spanish.

Both websites rely on the same research source for “evidence-based” drug information, Drug Effectiveness Review Project (DERP) of Oregon Health and Science University’s Science Center for Evidence-Based Policy, a fourteen state cooperative effort. The Project reviews and analyzes medical research on prescription drugs. A schedule of planned review updates is available from the AARP website. Reviews are projected to be updated annually. Hyperlinks to the text of the actual lengthy, technical DERP reviews are available from the both websites.

HOW TO GET HIGH QUALITY HEALTHCARE

The **Agency for Healthcare Quality and Research (AHRQ)**, part of the Department of Health and Human Services, recently released a publication to help consumers identify high quality healthcare. **Guide to Health Care Quality: How To Know It When You See It** is a booklet that’s part of AHRQ’s new consumer education campaign to help individuals become more active participants in decision-making regarding their healthcare.

The **Guide to Health Care Quality** at <http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/guidetog> includes steps that consumers can take to improve their quality of care. It explains the difference between clinical measures and consumer ratings. Clinical measures, such as those in AHRQ's National Healthcare Quality Report and National Healthcare Disparities Report, are used to track and improve the quality of care provided by doctors, hospitals, and other providers. While clinical measures can be used to assess quality of care, consumer ratings can indicate how satisfied people are with their health care. The booklet also lists Web sites and phone numbers for selected organizations and other resources.

"Getting quality health care means different things to different people; some people believe that getting quality health care is synonymous with good customer service," said AHRQ Director Carolyn M. Clancy, M.D. "While this is important, quality clinical care is even more important. Quality clinical care means receiving the proper treatments, screenings, and prescriptions, as well as being notified promptly about test results and receiving support at the right time."

Dr. Clancy released this booklet today in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, at the first in a series of town hall sessions with consumers. The purpose of these meetings is to educate consumers about health care quality issues and what they can do to improve their own quality of care. As part of the outreach to consumers, Dr. Clancy also has provided some of the key messages in an audio pod cast, which can be downloaded to computer or portable digital player by going to <http://www.healthcare411.org>.

The PDF version of the guide may be downloaded and printed from the AHRQ site. Free single print copies are also available by calling the AHRQ Publications Clearinghouse at (800) 358-9295 or by sending an e-mail to <mailto:ahrqpubs@ahrq.gov>.

NEW MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN

Will the new Medicare Prescription Drug Plan substantially reduce my drug costs? Is my current prescription drug coverage better? Am I eligible to enroll in the plan? Did I miss the enrollment deadline? Can I sign up at a later date? I take a lot of medications. Will the new plan cover them all?

These and a number of additional practical questions are concerns of many senior citizens as the January 1, 2006 launch of the Medicare Part D prescription drug plan approaches.

The AARP, national organization for retired persons, is providing non-technical answers to these and additional related questions in a newly issued publication entitled, **The New Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage: What You Need to Know**. The booklet highlights enrollment deadlines, initial coverage for drug costs, benefits for individuals with current drug coverage, calculation of Medicare drug benefits, the process of selecting and joining a Medicare prescription drug plan, and resources for additional help.

The publication is enhanced by larger type, an attractive, clearly designed layout, as well as charts and explanations that even an individual not employed full time in a Medicare office can understand.

Free copies, in Spanish as well as English versions, of this publication and the booklet, **The New Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage: Extra Help for People with Limited Income**, may be ordered online at the AARP website at http://www.aarp.org/health/medicare/the_new_medicare_prescription_drug_coverage_aarp_p.html. AARP membership is not required.

The New Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage: What You Need to Know booklet may also be viewed online in its entirety and may be printed from the AARP website in pdf format.

Additional information about the new Medicare drug plan may be accessed from the AARP website at <http://www.aarp.org/>. The AARP website also provides a link to authoritative, official information from the Medicare website at <http://www.medicare.gov/>.

An even more basic, briefer explanation than the AARP publication, entitled **Understanding the New Medicare Drug Prescription Drug Plan**, is available online on the consumer health website of the American Academy of Family Physicians at <http://familydoctor.org/848.xml>.

HEALTHY LIFESTYLE RECOMMENDATIONS ONLINE

Has the approaching New Year inspired you to become healthier? Are you trying to eat a healthy five-a-day serving quota of fruit and vegetables? How can you quickly find the appropriate serving size of dried fruit? Of vegetable juice? Are you seeking quick tips for increasing your amount of daily exercise without joining a gym? Do you need some realistic recommendations for quitting smoking?

Answers to these healthy choice questions and a variety of others related to nutrition, exercise, smoking cessation, and recommended medical screenings are available on the **Everyday Choices** website, a cooperative effort of the American Cancer Society, American Diabetes Association and American Heart Association at <http://www.everydaychoices.org/>

The entire text of this healthy lifestyle website is available online in Spanish as well as English.

The website includes a variety of online “Health Tools” to determine target heart rate, body mass index, nutrition and activity level, diabetes risk, walking progress, and heart attack risk.

There are hyperlinks to the three sponsoring organizations’ websites where there is additional information on these disease prevention topics, such as sample menus, calories burned for a variety of activities, weight loss recommendations, effective communication guidelines for speaking with health care professionals, and physical activity programs.



FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

The following books are recommended for public libraries and health sciences libraries with consumer health collections. They are not part of the UCHC library collection.

American Cancer Society’s Complete Guide to Prostate Cancer. David G. Bostwick, et. al. editor. American Cancer Society, 2005. 393 p. (ISBN 0-0944235-54-9 paperback), \$19.95.

Because of more frequent use of early detection screening procedures such as PSA (prostate-specific antigen) and digital rectal exams, prostate cancers are being discovered more frequently and according to the **American Cancer Society’s Complete Guide to Prostate Cancer**, “Incidence of prostate cancer has tripled during the past decade...” (p. xvii). However, prostate cancer grows slowly and may be present for a long period without detection. From a positive perspective, death rates have decreased.

This new addition to the American Cancer Society’s collection of books written for patients and families provides a comprehensive, understandable explanation of prostate cancer risk factors, screening, diagnosis, treatment, and recurrence rates, with information on alternative and complementary therapies. Individual chapters are written by an array of physicians and researchers specializing in urology and oncology. The chapters are signed and the book begins with a list of authors’ names and university and hospital affiliations.

The guide emphasizes that there is no one way for a patient to approach a prostate cancer diagnosis. “Each person’s cancer is different, and the way cancer affects a person’s body is unique.” (p. xix) This approach encourages patients to educate themselves and make individual decisions.

The guide persuades patients to be proactive in communicating with their physicians and includes specific questions to ask of members of the health care team about biopsy report results, treatment options, and treatment side effects. It also includes guidelines for evaluating a doctor’s practice. It incorporates an overview of Prostate Cancer Treatment Guidelines for Patients published by the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) and American Cancer Society and an explanation of a pathology report and the Gleason grading system used to describe prostate cancer stages.

The book discusses nonmedical aspects of a cancer diagnosis as well: employment, finances, insurance, personal relationships. It includes reflections and experiences of prostate cancer patients. There is a special section of the book addressed to family and friends wanting to provide support to a patient.

This helpful, supportive guide concludes with a resource guide, glossary, and list of references organized by chapter.

Caring for Your Parents. The Complete AARP Guide. Hugh Delehanty and Elinor Ginzler. Sterling Publishing Co., 2005. 221 p. (ISBN 1-4027-1739-3), \$19.95.

Although there are many informative, well-written books that provide guidelines for parenting young children, there are fewer books providing guidance for adults entering the challenging stage of helping their elderly parents as they age. In this very helpful handbook, Hugh Delehanty, editor-in-chief of AARP Publications, and Elinor Ginzler, Director for Livable Communities at AARP, provide compassionate, practical recommendations for assisting aging parents with medical, lifestyle, and financial decisions.



In the uncharted territory as parents age, adult children must not only gather information about insurance options, living arrangements, and medical care, but also communicate effectively to their parents the importance of using these resources. The book explains how to approach parents sensitively about these importance decisions, beginning with the chapter, “Bringing Up the Subject,” and how to function as a parent’s advocate in the health care system. It includes a helpful chapter, “The Medicare Maze,” that provides a clear explanation of how to access the system.

The book discusses the normal physical and emotional changes that accompany aging, as well as how to maintain one’s emotional stability during the stressful time of caregiving. It is enriched by “first person” accounts of parent caregiving from adult children with a variety of cultural backgrounds. The book concludes with chapters on bidding farewell to a parent, accepting a parent’s death, and the grieving process.

At the end of each chapter, there is information about resource organizations and relevant books. The appendix includes a worksheet for a family meeting, a “reality check” list about elderly drivers, a document inventory form, a situation assessment form, questions for evaluating assisted living facilities and nursing homes, and information about the stages of Alzheimer’s disease.

Parkinson’s Disease and the Family. A New Guide. Nutan Sharma and Elaine Richman. Harvard University Press, 2005. 222 p. (ISBN 0-674-01679-3 hardcover \$35.00, ISBN 0-674-01751-X paperback \$10.85).

When a patient experiences Parkinson’s disease, a movement disorder that is a frequent neurological disorder among middle-aged and older adults in the United States, there are consequences beyond the tremors, slow movement, and rigidity of limbs. She may also suffer slurred speech, difficulty swallowing, skin and vision problems, and psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, and memory loss. These symptoms can be intensified by stress.

One of three consumer health books in the new Harvard University Press Family Health Guides, described on the publisher’s website at <http://www.hup.harvard.edu/features/health/>, this guide was written by Dr. Nutan Sharma, an assistant in neurology at Massachusetts General Hospital, associate neurologist at Brigham and Women’s Hospital, and instructor at Harvard Medical School and Elaine Richman, of the Richman Associates bioscience communications firm.

Written in detailed, consumer-friendly language, it incorporates case histories to illustrate the progression of Parkinson’s disease and its effects, not only on the patient, but on family and friends as well. The book discusses risk factors, treatment, clinical trials of new medications, and includes realistic recommendations for coping with issues such as traveling, continuing to work, selecting a physician, use of alternative medicines, driving, sexual intimacy, and long-term care arrangements.

The appendix includes a resource guide to organizations and websites, a glossary, and references for additional reading.

Sleep to Save Your Life. The Complete Guide to Living Longer and Healthier Through Restorative Sleep. Gerard T. Lombardo. Collins, 2005. 308 p. (0-06-074253-4) \$24.95 .

The pressures of our stressful, contemporary 24/7 style of work, family life, and socializing have had an impact on the sleep needs of many Americans. Some workers disrupt their circadian rhythms by toiling during the night shift. Youngsters and adolescents are increasingly sleep deprived. There is more awareness of the possible serious repercussions of sleep problems such as sleep apnea and narcolepsy. Based on his fifteen years experience communicating with patients with sleep disorders as Director of the Sleep Center at Methodist Hospital in Brooklyn, New York, pulmonologist Dr. Gerald Lombardo presents a consumer-friendly overview of a wide range of sleep disorders and their treatments.

Using a chatty, humorous style and incorporating personal experiences and patient anecdotes, Dr. Lombardo discusses snoring and its relation to sleep apnea, narcolepsy, restless leg syndrome, insomnia, parasomnias such as sleep terrors and sleep walking, and related syndromes such as gastroesophageal reflux.

Dr. Lombardo incorporates self-screening tools, sleep diaries, and questionnaires into the text for readers trying to determine if they have a sleep disorder. He includes recommendations to assure restorative sleep (adjusting bedroom environment, keeping a consistent sleep and wake schedule, eating only light snacks before bedtime, etc.)

The book includes detailed information about sleep apnea and related health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, arrhythmia, hypertension, attention deficit disorder, depression, and narcolepsy as well as recommended treatment options for these conditions. However, Dr. Lombardo does not discuss the new, controversial surgery, pillar palatal implant system, which has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration but whose approval is opposed by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine.

There are helpful tips about “managing life with narcolepsy.” Separate chapters discuss sleep problems that occur in women, children, and older adults—and possible solutions.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Mayo Clinic Guide to Women’s Cancer. Lynn C. Hartmann and Charles L. Loprinzi. Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 2005. 638 p. (ISBN 1-893005-33-X) \$34.95. (UCHC call # QZ 201 R815 2005)



For the 350,000 women diagnosed each year in the U.S. with breast or gynecologic cancers and their families, the search for information on possible treatments and recovery can be overwhelming. Written in reasoned, understandable language that is directed to patients and families and arranged in an organized, attractive format, this comprehensive guide provides helpful introductory information on ovarian, fallopian tube, endometrial, uterine, cervical, vaginal, and vulvar cancers as well as breast cancer. A chapter on breast cancer is devoted to understanding risk statistics.

Written by two physicians, the information in this book has been reviewed by specialists at the Mayo Clinic. When discussing research results, the book gives an honest, non-inflammatory, careful analysis, acknowledging the circumstances when research on cancer causes and genetics have come to ambivalent conclusions. The guide is enriched by the personal stories of women who have experienced these cancers.

The book concludes with a section on “Living With Cancer” that discusses emotions experienced by cancer patients when they learn of their diagnosis and during treatment, coping with the side effects and potential complications of treatment, evaluating complementary and alternative treatments, and experiencing supportive care when a cure is not possible for an advanced stage cancer. There is a chapter directed specifically to partners of women with cancer that is concerned with emotions, daily life, sexual intimacy, and communicating with the affected partner.

A unique sixteen page Visual Guide provides color illustrations of cancer development and spread, stages of breast and gynecologic cancers, surgery, radiation, and drug therapy. The appendix includes a guide to additional resources and a glossary of medical terms.

*Healthnet News is written by Alberta L. Richetelle and Judith Kronick.
If you have questions about anything in the newsletter or about Healthnet services for Connecticut public libraries,
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ISSN: 1526-8624